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ABSTRACT

To increase the possibility for successful programs and to determine the validity of the concept of bilingual education for limited English-speaking children, this discussion centers on issues which militate against full-scale implementation of bilingual education programs in some school districts. The narrative defines innovation as an "entity which is viewed as new or different" and implementation as "the process of placing the innovation into practice"; it suggests that the issues surrounding the implementation of innovative bilingual educational programs vary in nature and reflect educational decisions which have been made at the federal, state, and local levels. The synthesis describes the following issues as having slowed down and impeded the implementation process: lack of clear goals of bilingual education; lack of opportunity for bilingual education programs to develop along accepted stages in the innovative process; resistance caused by the attributes of bilingual education (complexity, compatibility, communicability); the impact of competing innovations; the impact of policy on bilingual education; unrealistic expectations of bilingual education; inadequacy of evaluation designs; lack of resources; and context variables of bilingual education. The discussion calls for increased recognition of these issues and application of more educational change technology and knowledge. (JD)

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A Synthesis of Issues Related to the Implementation of Bilingual Education Programs

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A SYNTHESIS OF ISSUES RELATED TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

INTRODUCTION

Bilingual education is perhaps one of the most significant educational innovations of our times. Its advent has caused much debate and raised a great number of issues. Many of these are related to the degree which bilingual education programs have been implemented and the outcomes these programs have produced.

The purpose of this paper is to present a synthesis of some of the major issues which have surrounded the implementation of bilingual education programs. The issues are discussed in a general fashion. The papers by the school districts will address these issues, and additional issues, in more specific terms.

There are several reasons why it is important to study and understand the implementation process in bilingual programs. The most obvious reason is that unless we can identify and describe explicitly the particular programs that have been implemented, we will have no basis for assessing how well they work. Similarly, unless we can adequately assess bilingual programs, we have no basis for determining just how valid the concept of bilingual education is for limited English-speaking children. Another reason why it is important to study implementation is to understand why certain programs succeed while others fail.

Definitions of Innovation and Implementation

Innovation and implementation are pertinent terms in any discussion about educational change. Educational innovation has been defined in the literature in various ways. For example, Havelock (1973, p. 4) defines innovation as "any change which represents something new to the people being changed." In Strategies for Planned Change (Zaltman & Duncan, 1976, p. 12), innovation is

defined as "any idea, practice or material artifact perceived to be new by the relevant unit of adoption." Rothman (1974, p. 420) states that "an innovation may be viewed as any idea perceived as new by a population or organization." Specific to education, innovation has been described as any significant change in policy, curriculum, organizational structure, instructional approaches, and/or staffing patterns.

In view of the preceeding definitions, it is reasonable to classify bilingual education as an innovation. Moreover important, however, the innovation of bilingual education may differ from most educational innovations in at least five aspects: (1) it is, in many cases, a mandated innovation. As a general rule, obligatory programs are more difficult to implement than voluntary ones; (2) it is wide in scope. That is, it often has significant numbers of students, involves various grade levels, operates in multiple campuses, and can have varied subject content, community involvement, etc.; (3) it is an innovation which is in a constant state of change, i.e., it is evolving over time, as opposed to being fixed; (4) it demands of the user a high degree of commitment, and requires large amounts of time; and (5) it is an innovation which must be implemented in accordance with federal rules and regulations. Some of these differences will be further explored in this discussion as well as in the papers which will be presented by the school districts.

Implementation, like innovation, is a term which is also used in a variety of ways. For instance, Fullam and Promfret (1977) view implementation as "the actual use of an innovation, or what an innovation consists of in practice" (p. 336). In addition, the authors suggest that implementation in practice has at least five dimensions: changes in materials, structure, role/behavior, knowledge and understanding, and value internalization. The Dissemination Forum Final Report (1978) defines implementation as "the

facilitation of adoption, adaptation, and installation of improvements." Thus, innovation refers to the entity which is viewed as new or different while implementation refers to the process of placing the innovation into practice.

DISCUSSION OF THE ISSUES

The issues surrounding the implementation of bilingual education programs are several. They vary in nature and reflect educational decisions which have been made at the federal, state, and local levels. There are at least nine issues which, taken together, militate against full-scape implementation of bilingual education programs in some school districts. These issues are discussed below.

Issue #1: The Clarity of Goals

The one issue which has most seriously impeded the implementation of bilingual education is the lack of a clear and concise definition of goals and objectives. This has been true of most educational innovations. For instance, Charters and Pellegrin (1973) reported that one of the main problems in the implementation of PIATO, an advanced computer-assisted instructional system, was the lack of understanding of the proposed change. Similarly, Gross, et al. (1971), found that ambiguity about the advocated change was a major barrier to successful implementation. In addition, many of the early studies on Follow-Through were hampered because of a lack of clear model specifications and goals. Bilingual education has suffered from the same lack of goal clarification. This was particularly true of the early years. The original Title VII legislation did not clearly state a guiding philosophy, goals, nor specific strategies for implementing bilingual education. According to Sumner and Zellman (1977) "the law was vague concerning the substance of the envisioned educational programs and did not specify which special educational needs were to be served; there was no hint

about what expected student outcomes should be" (p. 1). The 1974 amendments (ESEA Title VII) provided more specificity and guidance to the field. However, these amendments did not solve the problem completely. For instance, a recent report from the Commissioner of Education to the Congress and the President (interAmerica Research Associates, 1979) indicated that one of the major problems regarding program specifications was the absence of clear regulations requiring LEA's to set measurable objectives to assess project performance. More recently, Horst, et al. (1979), reported that one of the difficulties in implementing the bilingual project information packages (PIP) was the conflicting goals of the various groups involved. For example, the Office of Education's goals were research on the delivery system and service to the local education agencies (LEA's). The LEA's goals were to obtain technical assistance and funding for their programs. The Training Resource Centers, who were responsible for disseminating PIP, also had their particular goals in mind. Needless to say, the conflicting nature of the goals had negative effect on the degree to which the PIP programs were implemented.

Issue #2: The Process of Innovation

Another factor which has impeded the success and speed of implementation of bilingual education programs has been the lack of opportunity for these programs to develop along accepted stages in the innovative process. According to Guba (1968), the ideal innovative process has four stages: (1) research, (2) development, (3) diffusion, and (4) adoption. Bilingual education, because of historical circumstances, did not proceed through the first three stages, and this has resulted in many of the difficulties we face today. To illustrate this point, let's look at how Rivlin and Timpane (1975) describe the activities of a program which follows an ideal innovative process: They state:

> The experiment would begin as highly controlled investigation at a single site involving random assignment to control and treatment groups and careful observations of inputs and outcomes. If the intervention appeared to have appreciable positive effects under these conditions, a couple of years would then be devoted to developing it further, creating a training program for teachers and instruments for measuring the program's implementation and outcomes. The intervention would next be tried out under natural conditions in a small number of sites, close enough to the sponsor's home base to be supervised without great travel and communication costs, and curriculum, training procedures and measuring instruments would be revised in light of this experience. Not until after all this development, small-scale testing, and revision had been successfully completed would a large scale field test be undertaken to find out how the intervention works under a variety of conditions and with a variety of populations. In the final stage, the full results of the field test and training would be disseminated to those who wanted to adopt the intervention in their own schools . . . while many of the conferees disagreed on the details of such a procedure, there was a broad consensus that the basic aim was right . . . that finding more effective methods in education demands commitment of time and resources to a multistage process in which large-scale field testing of new models is a late stage, preceded by intensive development work on each model, small scale testing, careful preparation for implementation and special development of measuring instruments for both inputs and outcomes. (pp. 18-19)

Most bilingual educators would agree that bilingual education has not been remotely subjected to the careful and meticulous sequential development process suggested by Rivlin and Timpane. In fact, in the early years, some LEA's were simultaneously implementing the project, developing materials, training teachers, and sometimes team teaching.

Issue #3: The Attributes of Bilingual Education

The nature and content of bilingual education has been another source of resistance which has definitely influenced implementation. Research indicates that the attributes of the intended innovation may, at times, be sources of resistance which may ultimately influence the degree to which a program is implemented (Barnet, 1953; Rogers & Shoemaker, 1971; Turnbull, et al., 1974; Zaltman & Lin, 1971). One such attribute is the complexity of the innovation. That is to say, the more complex the innovation, the more difficult it is to implement. Bilingual education is indeed a complex innovation often involving simultaneous changes in curriculum, staffing, and organizational structure.

Sumner and Zellman (1977) found that the implementation of bilingual programs often require changes in (1) materials, (2) instructional models, (3) staffing and pupil assignments, etc. These changes are greatly complicated when the innovation is actually a "bundle" of innovations consisting of such components as English-as-a-second language, Spanish-as-a-first and second language, math, science, and social studies instruction in Spanish. In fact, our work in defining and measuring instructional components of bilingual education substantiates that some classroom teachers are required to implement, simultaneously, multiple innovations such as reading in Spanish, math in Spanish, English as a second language, etc. (Domínguez & Tunmer, 1979).

Compatibility is another attribute which may delay the implementation of innovative programs. Essentially, compatibility refers to the degree to which the proposed innovation matches, or can fit comfortably within, the existing educational system. Needless to say, the closer the fit the better are the chances for successful implementation. Bilingual education is one innovation that seldom fits well within existing programs. The number of incompatibilities depends on the type and scope of the program. However, at a minimum most bilingual programs face the difficulty with the "fit" of the language and culture requirements. Another problem with the "fit" has been the inclusion of parents in the instructional and decision-making process.

The study by Smith, et al. (1977), commonly known as the Project Development Continuity (PDC), clearly substantiates the effect of compatibility on implementation:

> the single most powerful set of determinants of implementation during the first three years was the educational and community setting. Where existing programs or existing priorities were compatible with PDC, implementation was greatly facilitated. (p. 32)

The communicability of an innovation is another important attribute which must be considered in the implementation process. Communicability refers to the ease with which information about the innovation can be communicated to project personnel, administrators, parents and community members. Needless to say, the task of conveying the concept of bilingual education to others has been extremely difficult. Part of the difficulty lies in the complexity of bilingual education itself. However, it should be pointed out that we have not done an adequate job of telling the right people what bilingual education is all about. Bilingual education has been in a constant state of change, and even project teachers are hard pressed to keep abreast of its development. For instance, in 1978-1979, SEDL conducted a study to examine the level and type of concerns of teachers who are presently employed in bilingual education programs. The study found that the lack of information about bilingual education was the primary concern of teachers, even after four years of involvement with their respective projects (Domínguez & Tunmer, 1979).

Issue #4: The Lack of Resources

It is a known fact that adequate resources are essential ingredients for the successful implementation of any educational innovation. The lack of resources has been cited repeatedly as one of the major obstacles to successful implementation of bilingual education. A case in point: in 1975, the Commissioner's Report (U.S. Department of HEW), on the condition of bilingual education, indicated that 129,000 bilingual teachers were needed to meet the demands of the target population. In addition, the report stated that there was a lack of materials, especially in languages other than Spanish. And these same problems were echoed in hearings during 1977 by the National Advisory Council on Bilingual Education.

In 1977, Sumner and Zellman reported that while the shortage situation had improved, all the projects they visited suffered from a lack of teachers who had received training in bilingual education. In addition, most projects reported difficulty in locating commercially-developed materials appropriate to their needs. More recently, the evaluation of the implementation of the PIP (Horst, et al., 1979) indicated that "half or more of the PIP adopters could not accurately replicate the PIP projects or any projects requiring a full staff of skilled bilingual teachers" (p. xx).

In addition to the scarcity of teachers and materials, programs have also suffered from a lack of validated instructional typologies. It is true that theoretical typologies have been proposed by Fishman and Lovas (1970), Mackey (1972), Paulston (1975), Spolsky (1974), Valencia (1969), and others. However, these typologies only served as excellent conceptual guideposts, but they did not necessarily represent the reality that existed in the field at that time. Fishman (1977) believes that the typologies appeared on the scene in advance of the empirical data and will have to undergo revision and replacement. Our own work confirms Fishman's view. In describing the existing features of bilingual education programs, we found little resemblance to the theoretical typologies. Instead we found that type of content and instructional time in the home language varied across classrooms, grade levels, and programs (SEDL, 1978).

Issue #5: The Impact of Competing Innovations

A fifth issue which has affected the implementation of bilingual education has been the presence of multiple innovation programs competing for instructional time and other resources. This is particularly true in cases where school districts have ESEA Title I, Title IV, and Title I migrant, programs. These programs, even when carefully coordinated, may detract from the bilingual efforts. As a matter of fact, Horst, et al.

(1979) reported that the existence of other innovative efforts sometimes interferred with the implementation of bilingual education projects. Similarly, the SEDL evaluation of the two bilingual PIP sites suggested that multiple innovations operating in the same site tended to divert attention from the implementation of the PIP projects (Jackson & Hidalgo, 1978).

Issue #6: The Impace of Policy

Federal policy governing education reform has played a significant role in determining the quality of educational programs implemented and sustained at the local level.

Recently, national educational reform policy has been criticized for being short-sighted and ineffective (Berman & McLaughlin, 1978). The question of short-sightedness is amply demonstrated by González (1975). He concludes that to a degree ESEA Title VII policy has handicapped the growth and maturation of bilingual education because of its goal to move children into English-only instruction. He goes on to note that

> Most bilingual educators favor an approach to the provision of equal educational opportunity which involves the concurrent development of both the home language of the child and the English. There are sound rationales for doing this from several perspectives: educational, societal, psychological, enrichment, self-worth, etc. It is difficult to understand, therefore, why the most regressive of several possible ideologies should serve as the only officially sanctioned basis for bilingual education today. (p. 4)

At the local level, administrative policy can have a significant influence, positively or negatively, on the implementation of bilingual education programs. For example, Horst, et al. (1979), reported that the research on this issue was very scarce. Perhaps the school districts, in describing their experiences will give us additional insights on this very important matter.

Issue #7: Unrealistic Expectations of Bilingual Education

The problems that Mexican Americans face in schools are complex and

deeprooted. This fact is well documented (U. S. Reports by the Commission on Civil Rights, 1971-1974). Despite the progress that has been made, much remains to be done. It is unrealistic to expect that bilingual education alone can solve the many problems faced by language minority groups. González (1979) adds that bilingual education has contributed significantly to the improvement of education for limited-English-speaking students, but that school districts must still (1) improve administrative practices and procedures; (2) improve curriculum techniques and materials, (3) improve home/school/community relations; (4) provide adequate training and staff development; (5) redesign poorly conceived patterns of student and faculty assignments; and (6) provide adequate training and preparation of teachers and other personnel.

In the same vein, the recent PIP evaluation (Horst, et al., 1979), concluded that the reasons for low achievement are much more complex than simple lack of English skills. Moreover, the report suggests that while many of the target children understood more when they received instruction in their mother tongue, other factors may have been more significant in terms of learning (e.g., the instructional methods, affective climate, personal expectations). Given the complexity and depth of the problem, bilingual education is but one step in the resolution process.

Another unrealistic expectation is related to the time required to implement an innovation as complex as bilingual education. Policy makers have usually underestimated the time needed to carry out the full implementation process. Berman and McLaughlin (1978) suggest that it takes from six to ten years to get results on the effectiveness of an intended change. If this is true for unidimensional innovations, one could expect that the time required to implement bilingual education programs would be much longer.

Issue #8: Inadequate Evaluation Designs

Bilingual education evaluation designs have been amply criticized for

their inadequacy to validly measure educational outcomes (Alkin, et al., 1979; Burry, 1979; González, 1979; Rodriguez-Brown & Cohen, 1976). These poorly-designed evaluations have also slowed down bilingual education program development because they have not provided data related to the implementation process. According to Burry (1979), "evaluation of bilingual education programs has frequently provided little more than vague descriptions of the nature and content of the programs, and such information has been of limited use to decision makers" (p. 7).

In addition, for the most part evaluations of bilingual programs have been summative rather than formative. Since bilingual education is a complex innovation and constantly changing as it evolves, the formative evaluation approach should predominate. This would give decision makers feedback in a form they can use and at the time when it is most relevant. Summative evaluations are applicable once a program has been fully developed and implemented, but certainly not on a year-to-year basis as implementation proceeds.

Issue #9: The Context of Bilingual Education

Research indicates that context variables play an important role in the implementation of educational innovation. Some of these variables include: the socioeconomic status of the community; the demographic character of the LEA's location; the support of the general community for educational activities; the influence of the media when reporting on educational activities; the open or closed relationships between the LEA and its community; the individual characteristics of the people involved in effecting change; the organizational climate of the LEA; and the political influences exerted by various agencies and constituencies.

In discussing the politics of bilingual education, Sumner and Zellman (1977) claim that, in general, the political support for bilingual education

has been greater and more consistent at the national and regional levels than at the local levels. This political influence has led to judicial and legislative actions which have enhanced the growth and development of bilingual education. Not surprisingly, political activities at the local level have varied from school district to school district. As would be expected, some school districts did not welcome bilingual education. There was opposition from administrators and regular staff. Sumner and Zeller (1977) note that the opposition from the administrators could be based on

> personal politics, but it also could be an expression of their budget and organization orientation; it should not be surprising that an innovation that poses such disruption to established budget and staffing priorities should inspire administrative recalcitrance (p. 41).

They also found

> frequent resistance toward bilingual projects among regular staff, particularly during the initial phases. The resistance generally reflects differences in opinion about the worth of bilingual education as compared with the simpler ESL approach, but also mirrors real or imagined threats to the job security of monolingual staff (p. 41).

Additionally the study discovered that multi-agency involvement was another factor which contributed significantly to the political complexity surrounding the implementation of bilingual education. For instance, besides the Office of Bilingual Education (OBE), other state and federal agencies joined to promote and develop bilingual education projects. A number of states now have legislation mandating bilingual education. Similarly a number of federal agencies support bilingual education related services, e.g., Johnson-O'Malley and Indian Education Act, ESEA, Title IV and Title I and Title I Migrant (ESEA).

At the district level, political influences had a significant impact on the type, the quality, and the direction of bilingual education projects. The study by Sumner and Zellman (1977) found that political influences were present in all the stages of the innovation process. In the initiation, it

was found that many of the programs were adopted because money was available, not because of community pressures. In the design phase, it was found that the major influence on program design came from outside agencies in the form of rules and regulations. The regulatory influences were more pronounced in the operationalization phase and resulted in disrupting the implementation of programs. Finally, the study revealed that the political influences were extremely evident in the continuation phase. That is to say, that the same forces--judicial and legislative mandates, national and regional constituency action--were at play when decisions on continuation were made.

Sumner and Zellman (1977) concluded that bilingual education "has created more debate and raised political issues to a much greater extent than any of the other change agent programs included in the Rand Study. In fact, few educational innovations raise so many questions about the basic goals and outcomes of public education" (p. 40).

Yet another context variable which may influence the implementation process is the place of bilingual education programs within the organizational structure. Presumably, direct lines of communication to the source of authority will increase the prestige of the project directors and give her/him more leverage in developing the project. Sumner and Zellman (1977) found that there were a variety of hierarchical arrangements of Title VII projects; however, most of the projects they studied were administered through the office of special or extramural programs. They point out that this is the usual place for programs funded with external funds on a time-limited basis.

SUMMARY

In summary, bilingual education is a complex innovation in the process of change and development. Factors which can be said to have slowed down

and impeded the implementation process are: the lack of clear goals of bilingual education; the lack of opportunity of bilingual education programs to develop along accepted stages in the innovative process; the resistance caused by the attributes of bilingual education; the impact of competing innovations; the impact of policy on bilingual education; the unrealistic expectations of bilingual education; and the inadequacy of evaluation designs.

When educators and policy makers increasingly recognize these issues, and apply more educational change technology and knowledge, the possibility for more success in implementation will increase.

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